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The Origin and Development of 3-US

A Brief History Prepared Shortly After World War II—Part II

Diplomatic Affairs

Origin of Service

Prior to the inauguration of the Bay series, the field commands were on the receiving end of a sporadic and uncertain service by which intelligence of military value in diplomatic and attaché traffic was sent to them. This was accomplished by the AWL series. A message seemingly valuable to the field would be noticed at Bletchley Park or one of the ministries, and when the opportunity presented itself, an MIX or AIX embodying the substance of the message would be prepared for appropriate commands. The system, apart from the delay involved, was adequate for the occasional message which was in fact sent to commands. It resulted, however, in much intelligence of military value remaining unsignalled because no one had the responsibility to forward it to the field. There were collateral disadvantages in the absence of continuity and centralized handling of the material.

Col. Taylor, accordingly, in January of 1944 commenced discussions designed more fully to exploit the potential value of the diplomatic and attaché series. The American contribution in this field was proportionately heavier than in the military field. Moreover, an officer of MID, WD, London, was on duty at Berkeley Street giving virtually his full time to work on this traffic. It seemed for these reasons appropriate that the undertaking be an American commitment. In a memorandum of 8 February 1944, Col. Taylor proposed to Group Captain Jones that the American representative at Berkeley Street

select from BJ's¹¹ and auxiliary series those messages which seemed suitable for transmission to commands; his selections would be called to the attention of 3-US, which would prepare a signal for the field.

This proposal was approved in March both by G-2 and the directors of intelligence in the U.K. The directive followed the general outline of Col. Taylor's proposal, with the natural addition that ministries and Hut 3 sections should retain their normal responsibility for the form and content of all signals. This intelligence, under the directive, was to be sent to commands in the Bay series.

The Source of the Bays

Originally the Bays derived from three main sources, BJ's, SJA's and JMA's. The BJ series included all diplomatic traffic and those of the military attachés which were processed at Berkeley Street. The series averaged about fifty messages a day, from which perhaps one a day would prove Bayworthy.

The SJA's, a series which commenced about the time the Bay series was inaugurated, consisted of messages sent by the Japanese Naval Attachés at Berlin and Venice, together with occasional messages from other Japanese officials sent over that link. The messages were teleprinted to the ministries, and 3-US received a copy of each teleprint. On an average about five messages a day were produced, from which four or five signals a week

¹¹ The BJ series is discussed in the next section.

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The Manor House at Bletchley Park

were prepared. Allied intelligence benefited considerably by the fact that both of the Japanese Naval Attachés who served in Berlin during this period were men of exceptional competence; they seemed able to produce comprehensible and reasonably accurate descriptions of technical equipment, and their occasional ventures into German strategy and defenses were of considerably higher order than ordinarily encountered in the attaché field.

JMA's produced in the military section of Bletchley Park, comprised messages from the Japanese military attachés in the various capitals. At full flood, 50 or 60 of these messages would be broken each day. The traffic was more voluminous than profitable, but the attachés did send back a considerable volume of Allied order-of-battle information which proved useful to "A Force."¹² Occasionally, they also reported, from personal involvement, items of general intelligence of some value to commands, such as a report of the military attaché in France after accompanying the Ambassador on a tour of coastal defenses. Less than one Bay a day resulted from this traffic, and most of these were selected for "A Force."

A number of less important series were fed into the Bay mill. These were: (1) COM's, commercial messages from diplomatic sources produced at Berkeley St.; (2) JADI's and GERDI's, Japanese and German diplomatic messages produced at Berkeley St. and placed in these

series because they were out of date at the time of distribution; (3) SPARMA's and AS's, produced by the military section at Bletchley from Spanish military and air attaché traffic; (4) BUMAT's, also produced by the military section at Bletchley from Bulgarian MA traffic. Since they frequently contained bomb-damage reports or matters relevant to the troubled Balkan waters, they were more fruitful than the other lesser series; perhaps two signals a week derived from them but their cryptographic classification was that of Pearl rather than Ultra. They were therefore not sent over the Hut 3 link, but had to be distributed through the channels used for medium-grade signals.

Procedures

The mechanics by which this polyglot collection of information and misinformation was transformed into command signals was hardly complex. The messages arrived already translated. The Baywright's task was to select the appropriate message, do the research necessary for a proper evaluation, and draft the signal. The accuracy of the information, wherever possible, was verified by recourse to the indices at Bletchley Park or the pundits at ministries. At times conversations with translators were profitable in clearing up linguistic or cryptographic difficulties.

The actual drafting of the signals could be a rather tricky business, since the elimination of the verbosity or indirection of phrasing in the original message was desirable and yet more hazardous than in CX/MSS. In

¹² "A Force" was a British and later Anglo-American deception effort in the Near East and Mediterranean.

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diplomatic messages the tone is often highly significant. The drafter of Bays was required to strike a compromise.

When a signal had been prepared, the ordinary procedure was to submit it, along with the original message, to the appropriate section in Hut 3 (or Block A)¹³ before dispatch. This also involved recurrent visitations upon certain other elements at Bletchley Park. After approval by the section involved, the signals, during the early weeks, were routed both through the advisors in the Watch and the Duty Officer. With the increasing volume of normal Hut 3 traffic, it was directed in May 1944 that the advisors and duty officers should be spared participation in the Bays.

The Nature of the Bays

According to travellers returning from Mediterranean commands, the Bays provided a very welcome—sometimes even comic—relief. There is some evidence to indicate that in the west they were taken more seriously, perhaps too seriously.

The series included both trivial and inaccurate matters, as, for example, the notion of the Japanese Military Attaché in Lisbon of the disposition of Allied forces in Egypt. But it likewise included matters of substantial strategic importance. Reference has already been made to one—the tours of coastal fortifications. Other noteworthy signals presented German strategy as "dressed up" for the benefit of Tokyo, and Japanese reports on the Wehrmacht's appreciation of major Allied intentions.

Much of the early and detailed information on the German jet and rocketplane programs was found in Japanese (chiefly Naval Attaché) reports out of Berlin. The only clear statement that something in the nature of the Ardennes offensive would be attempted was forwarded by Japanese Ambassador Oshima following his last talk with Hitler in August 1944. Unfortunately Hitler said the offensive would start in November, and the warning was not taken too seriously.

While the satellite Balkan countries were actively cooperating with the Germans, and for some time thereafter, weekly summaries of political information from that region were signalled to the Mediterranean. This was done in the belief that items grouped together

took on more meaning than when isolated. As these countries were gradually liberated and communication privileges were denied to Axis and neutral diplomats, such material dried up, and that particular service was abandoned.

Related Series

The Bays were the vehicle for providing commands with diplomatic information of military value. A parallel series, known as Starks, extracted political information from the same sources. At the beginning, in the summer of 1944, the Starks were the responsibility of IE¹⁴ and were sent only to General Strong for General Eisenhower. The Starks consisted of verbatim texts of selected messages. Originally they were passed over the SLU¹⁵ link to SHAEF, but, after a few months, they were transmitted daily by courier.

3-US associated itself with the Starks in the autumn of 1944. It had come to Col. Taylor's attention that high-ranking British and American officers at Air Ministry were from time to time disseminating political material to the higher commands associated with them. To regularize and control this and to coordinate Bays and Starks, he proposed, in a memorandum dated 16 November, that one service encompassing all diplomatic material be created to service all persons whose work required access to such material. He based his proposal on the grounds that the system then operating was duplicative and inefficient for the following reasons: (1) the Starks and the Air Ministry series both covered political intelligence from the same source and in some instances were seen by the same recipient; (2) Air Ministry received only those BJs which Berkeley St. saw fit to send to them; (3) Air Ministry, it was believed, was not fully familiar with the pitfalls and technical problems involved in disseminating diplomatic Ultra; (4) security would be furthered by centralization of dissemination; and (5) to service leading military figures from uncoordinated sources was dangerous and confusing. After various conferences the proposal was accepted, and the responsibility for the service was divided among 3-US, IE, and the American liaison officer at Berkeley Street.

The Starks were continued, and to the distribution list were added Air Commodore Grierson for Air Chief Marshal Tedder and General MacDonald for General Spaatz. IE continued to prepare the items which were sent out daily by courier, but the selection of items was made

¹³Some of the "huts" at Bletchley Park were later relocated in larger buildings or "Blocks." They still retained their "hut" designations, however.

¹⁴Intelligence Exchange of GC & CS.

¹⁵Special Liaison Unit, the forerunner of the U.S. SSO system.

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The Grounds At Bletchley Park On Which the Huts Were Located

by G-2's representative at Berkeley Street, who on scrambler phone daily reported his selections to 3-US. 3-US and IE independently read the day's output, and if either disagreed with the selections a three-cornered discussion ensued until an agreement was reached. Thus the part played by 3-US in the production of Starks was to exercise control over what material should be disseminated.

Closely related to the Starks was the series called Coffee. It began late in December 1944 and consisted of political information of value to the American Ambassador in Paris. It was handled like the Starks, save that the copy to be transmitted was normally prepared by 3-US rather than by IE.

Finally, in May 1945, on the eve of the dissolution of Hut 3, the Nippi series was started. The recipient was the Japanese Section of G-2, SHAEF. The principal aim of the service was to provide information from diplomatic sources which might aid in locating Japanese personalities and documents in Europe. The Nippi series, which

consisted of summaries, excerpts, or full texts from diplomatic sources, was transmitted by courier once a week.

Personnel and Liaison

Administratively, 3-US at its peak controlled 68 people. Of these, 19 were serving in the field as SLU's, 24 as "specialists" at commands, 3 in London, and 12 as advisors in Hut 3. The remaining 10 may be said to have made up the actual section known as 3-US.

The head of the section necessarily spent most of his time in problems outside the scope of the section. The person in charge of 3-US was his deputy. Four officers serviced Washington, two on military matters, two on air. Another two officers handled all of the diplomatic traffic, and two civilians served in a secretarial capacity.

Had the war continued, this staff would have been halved, since the service to G-2 would have been turned

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over to advisors, and one civilian could easily have handled the greatly reduced secretarial work.

On the personnel side the great difficulty experienced by the section was that it was regarded by commands as a sort of reservoir. When there was need in the field for an American intelligence officer who had some knowledge of the handling of Ultra, 3-US was called upon to produce a body. When the need was urgent the section normally sent its best qualified officer and then requested a replacement from Washington. Therefore, what with the factors of time and space, the section frequently found itself operating with five when it needed ten. Conversely, traffic seemed to fall off just when large numbers of reinforcements arrived from overseas, so that there was not much work to be done and many idle hands.

The desired qualifications for staffing the unit were an adequate grounding in military intelligence and, if possible, a reading knowledge of French and German. But the work done by this particular section could have been done well by any person with a reasonably trained mind and a modicum of common sense.

In order to do its work properly 3-US maintained at all times close liaison with other sections in the Hut and with other parts of Bletchley Park. With London, thanks to G-2 representatives at Berkeley Street and Ryder Street, there was a daily interchange of information.

Some amusement was caused by a cable from Washington to the chief American Naval Officer at Bletchley Park, advising him to do what he could to coordinate his efforts with 3-US. The relationship was always a pleasant one, but there was little in common between the two groups, since the naval party was primarily cryptographic.

Close liaison was maintained between 3-US and American commands in the European Theater. As has been seen 3-US had at least one representative at each American headquarters which received Ultra. Considerable chit-chat passed between these representatives and the mother section, and at times this liaison directly contributed to an improved service to the field from Hut 3. As has been shown, 3-US had a large part in initiating the inexperienced intelligence staff of FUSAG into the mysteries of Ultra, and at a later date the section had a role to play when USSTAF widened its interests to include tactical as well as strategic matters.

By virtue of its nationality 3-US was constantly serving as American liaison with various sections in the Park. Almost daily the telephone would bring a question, usually baffling, concerning American order of battle, customs, slang phrases, etc. The translators of Japanese attaché traffic were ever hopeful that 3-US could explain to them what a "Weasel" was, or who commanded the 3rd U.S. Fleet.

Conclusion

When as an old man Benjamin Franklin was reviewing his long career, he asserted that if he were privileged to live his life over again he would choose to do just what he had done. The historian of 3-US cannot be so smug. Much that was done by the section should not have been done.

The previous sections have been factual. The subject matter might well be handled differently by different persons, but the story would be substantially the same. The present section differs in being, necessarily, more personal. That we were not always right would be readily admitted by any historian. But where we were right, where wrong, is a matter of opinion. What follows is the individual opinion of one who has been closely associated with the section from early January 1944 to the present.

Much that was "wrong," as has been pointed out, was the result of circumstances over which the section had no control. The United States entered the war some two-and-a-half years after Bletchley Park had been set up. Another year and a half elapsed before G-2 and GC & CS agreed to share the products of Ultra. It would have been impracticable, if possible, to have set up at that time, or during the year that followed, the system which eventually evolved. An organization had to be built from nothing; personnel had to be trained; facilities had to be developed.

Furthermore, as one examines the early records, the picture that emerges is of G-2 and British authorities walking around and eyeing each other like two mongrels who have just met. Presumably and quite naturally the ministries in London were reluctant to risk Ultra's neck by sharing this precious information with an unproved and shadowy group in Washington. Presumably and equally naturally G-2 was from Missouri and wished to be quite certain that he had access to all the material Bletchley was turning up. The lack of confidence on both sides delayed the development of 3-US.

The chief mistake made by the section was its waste of time and manpower. Many hundreds of man-hours were needlessly spent in an over-elaborate method of preparing signals to Washington. The idea was to simplify matters for our customers. The intention, whether admitted or not, was to guide them by a very careful arrangement of texts and references. Great emphasis was placed on matters which, it was gradually realized, were trivial.

Clearly, if at some future date another Hut 3 is called for and another 3-US is charged with the responsibility of keeping G-2 enlightened, a system such as was developing at the end should be adopted as most efficient and most economical. G-2 should be treated, as far as the

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Watch is concerned, as if it were a high headquarters in the field (like SHAEF). In other words, it should receive all signals sent to commands. At the same time it should be regarded as the ministries are and receive (by bag) a copy of all teleprints and reports. A very small section, possibly two officers and a secretary, could serve as liaison and could supplement by additional signals what would be sent out by the Watch.

The reasons for the section's diplomatic commitment have been given. They were good at the time, but in planning a future Hut 3 consideration should be given to the formation of still another section whose function would be to serve as liaison with all agencies producing diplomatic traffic and to draft signals based on that traffic for the appropriate commands.

One further point should be mentioned while considering where the section was wrong. Obviously it is a matter which goes far beyond 3-US and Hut 3, but its importance is such that it must be touched upon. We should have structured 3-US so that it represented naval as well as air and military interests. The problems concerned with a joint, combined intelligence service have not been solved by this war. A solution is not impossible and is greatly to be desired.

It was right and proper that the section was represented on the various Hut 3 committees and concerned itself with related groups in London. It may be that the section's representative normally played a listener's role, since, apart from diplomatic traffic, the section did not handle raw material. Nevertheless, the gain to 3-US and

to Washington from such participation was considerable, and the gain was not entirely on the American side.

The self-imposed task of reviewing signals sent to commands bore fruit. There were many times when persons in other sections were annoyed by 3-US concerning the content, priority, or routing of a given signal. On some of these occasions they refused to budge; and not infrequently, particularly when the Western Front was young, the criticisms of 3-US were accepted and action taken. The somewhat different approach of the section provided a useful check on the principal mission of Hut 3.

There is no question as to the rightness of having had a 3-US. Both British and Americans have gained by American participation in the work of Hut 3. Officially, of course, it was highly necessary that G-2 be represented in Hut 3. Unofficially, the team play that was always in evidence should be encouraging to all who look to the future of both nations. In April 1945, the head of Hut 3 referred to "the friendship and close cooperation that have throughout so clearly marked the integration of American and British personnel." The phrase rings true to 3-US.

Lt. Col. F. W. Hilles, USA, directed a unit of 3-US at Bletchley Park under Col. Taylor, and, with the assistance of the chiefs of other units, compiled this brief history in 1945.